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International application number: PCT/US05/011839

International filing date: 07 April 2005 (07.04.2005)

Document type: Certified copy of priority document

Document details: Country/Office: US
Number: 60/560,033
Filing date: 07 April 2004 (07.04.2004)

Date of receipt at the International Bureau: 09 May 2005 (09.05.2005)

Remark: Priority document submitted or transmitted to the International Bureau in compliance with Rule 17.1(a) or (b)

1314704

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APPLICATION NUMBER: *60/560,033*
FILING DATE: *April 07, 2004*
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Express Mail Label No. EL990040433US

01576 U.S. PTO 040704

22151 U.S. PTO 60/560033 040704

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Additional inventors are being named on the 1 *separately numbered sheets attached hereto*

TITLE OF THE INVENTION (500 characters max)

A BEVERAGE MAKING APPARATUS AND METHOD USING LOOSE BEVERAGE SUBSTANCE

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ENCLOSED APPLICATION PARTS *(check all that apply)*

☑ Specification *Number of Pages* 11
☐ CD(s), Number
☑ Drawing(s) *Number of Sheets* 7
☑ Other (specify) Return Postcard
☐ Application Data Sheet. See 37 CFR 1.76

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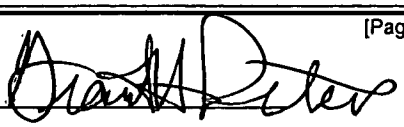
Respectfully submitted,

SIGNATURE 

Date April 7, 2004

TYPED or PRINTED NAME Grant H. Peters

REGISTRATION NO. 35,977 *(if appropriate)*

Docket Number: 27726-95865

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Docket Number 27726-95865

INVENTOR(S)/APPLICANT(S)		
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Christopher W.	Rahn	Virden, Illinois

Number 1 of 1

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on 4/7/04

Grant H. Peters

PROVISIONAL PATENT APPLICATION

of

ARTHUR H. BUNN
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and
CHRISTOPHER W. RAHN

for

A BEVERAGE MAKING APPARATUS AND METHOD USING LOOSE BEVERAGE SUBSTANCE

Attorney Docket No. 27726/95865

A CUSTOMIZED POD FOR USE IN A BEVERAGE BREWER

BACKGROUND

[0001] A variety of brewing apparatus have been developed to combine heated water with a brewing substance such as ground coffee or tea material in order to infuse the material and produce a brewed beverage. There are many ways to combine the water with the brewing substance.

[0002] One way of brewing a beverage is to encapsulate the brewing substance in a filter material. The brewing substance in the filter material provides a convenient package for handling a predetermined quantity of brewing substance. The filter material provides a package or container for the brewing substance. This package allows the brewing substance to be handled prior to brewing and after brewing without complication or mess.

[0003] Such brewing substances pre-packaged in filter material are referred to as "pods" or "sachets." Pods can be compressed while packaging in the filter material or left in a generally loose condition. Pods are typically circularly shaped and have a somewhat flattened configuration. Thus, pods often are provided in the shape of a disc or puck. Pods generally range in a size from approximately 45 mm to 60 mm and contain approximately 9-11 grams of brewing substance. The typical pod is used to produce approximately 8 ounces of brewed beverage. As a result, pods are generally used in conjunction with single-serve brewers (*i.e.*, one or two cup brewers) rather than the larger, multi-serve brewers.

[0004] Although convenient, pod use in single-serve brewers may be less desirable in some cases. For example, because the pods are prepackaged by a pod manufacturer, the selection of brewing substances is limited to the pod manufacturer's selection. As a result, a consumer or user may not be able to use his/her favorite brewing substance when utilizing a prepackaged pod. Similarly, because the pods are prepackaged, varying the strength of the resultant beverage may be accomplished by increasing or decreasing the amount of brewing water delivered to the brewing substance or the pattern of delivering water to the brewing substances.

[0005] Uniform flavor extraction from the brewing material may be more difficult to achieve with a pod. Brewing substance is confined within the pod and generally is not free to agitate in the brewing liquid. Instead, the brewing liquid tends to pass directly from the top of the pod to the bottom of the pod, collecting solubles as it passes through. This vertical flow pattern through the pod may result in some areas of the brewing substance being over extracted and other areas being under extracted. Accordingly, the flavor of the resulting

beverage may be affected due the non-uniform extraction of solubles, particles and other flavor characteristics from the particles of brewing substance.

[0006] In some instances, access to prepackaged pods is limited due, in part, to their proprietary nature (*i.e.*, certain prepackaged pods are suitable for use in a particular single-serving brewer) and their associated limited distribution. For example, some brands of prepackaged pods associated with the more expensive single-serving brewers may only be purchased from high-end department stores or mail/Internet ordering.

[0007] It would be desirable to provide some apparatus and method of selective containment of the brewing substance used in a brewer.

[0008] It would be desirable to provide the ability to allow a user to select the brewing substance used in a brewer.

[0009] It would be desirable to provide an ability to adjust the quantity of brewing substance used in a brewer.

DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0010] The organization and manner of the structure and function of the disclosure, together with the further objects and advantages thereof, may be understood by reference to the following description taken in connection with the accompanying drawings, and in which:

[0011] FIG. 1. is a perspective view of an embodiment of a brewer for use with a customized pod as set forth in the present disclosure;

[0012] FIG. 2 is an enlarged partial fragmentary cross-section side elevation view taken along 2-2 in FIG. 1;

[0013] FIG. 3 is a view of a brewing substance holder removed from the brewer of FIG. 1;

[0014] FIGS. 4-6 are perspective side views of a reusable pod in the form of an infusion container as set forth in the present disclosure;

[0015] FIGS. 7-8 are perspective views of another reusable pod in the form of a reusable purse-shaped container as set forth in the present disclosure;

[0016] FIG. 9 is a perspective view of a disposable customized pod having a cup-cake filter shape as set forth in the present disclosure;

[0017] FIGS. 10-11 are side views of a disposable customized pod having a twist-top pouch shape as set forth in the present disclosure;

[0018] FIG. 12 is a side view of a tape of detachable disposable customized pods as set forth in the present disclosure.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

[0019] While the present disclosure may be susceptible to embodiment in different forms, there is shown in the drawings, and will be described herein in detail, one or more embodiments with the understanding that the present description is to be considered an exemplification of the principles of the disclosure and is not intended to be exhaustive or to limit the disclosure to the details of construction and the arrangements of components set forth in the following description or illustrated in the drawings.

[0020] In general, a customized pod for use in a brewer is disclosed. A customized pod for use in a single-serving brewer is disclosed. The customized pod many be configured in one of many suitable configurations adapted to enable substantial containment of a brewing substance while at the same time, allowing brewing substance selection and accommodating varying amounts of the selected brewing substance. Although described for use in a single-serving single brewer, it is contemplated that the customized pods described herein may also be utilized with other types of brewing devices, for example, with a French-press or plunger-type beverage maker.

[0021] As shown in FIG. 1, a single-serving brewer 20 includes a body 22, a base 24 and an upper portion 26. The upper portion 26 is configured to be positioned above a container such as a cup 28 for dispensing the brewed beverage into the cup 28. It should be noted that many different configurations of the single-serving brewers 20 can be utilized in conjunction with the various embodiments of the customized pod described in this disclosure. For example, in addition to the single-server brewer manufactured by Bunn and described herein, single-serving brewers manufactured by Black & Decker, Krups, Home Café, Hamilton Beach, Mr. Coffee, Melitta, Senseo, Flavia, Keurig and Nespresso, to name a few, can be utilized in conjunction with the customized pods.

[0022] Terms including beverage, beverage making and brewing as used herein are intended to be broadly defined as including but not limited to the brewing of coffee, tea, herbs and any other brewed beverage. This broad interpretation is also intended to include, but is not limited to any process of infusing, steeping, reconstituting, diluting, dissolving, saturating or passing a liquid through or otherwise mixing or combining a beverage substance with a liquid such as water without a limitation to the temperature of such liquid unless

specified. This broad interpretation is also intended to include, but is not limited to beverage substances such as ground coffee, tea, herbs, liquid beverage concentrate, powdered beverage concentrate, freeze dried coffee or other beverage concentrates, to obtain a desired beverage or other food.

[0023] While a limited number of embodiments of the "customized pod" are described herein, it is contemplated that any form of beverage brewing substance container that substantially contains the brewing substance while allowing brewing substance selection, may be used. It is further contemplated that the present customized pod could utilize other concentrates such as freeze dried concentrates, gel, liquid, powder or any other form of concentrate which will operate with the disclosed customized pod as well as equivalents thereof and any modifications which might be required to modify the customized pod to be used with such other substances, if necessary.

[0024] FIG. 2 shows a section of the upper portion 26 of the single-serving brewer 20, taken along cross-sectional line 2-2 in FIG. 1. In FIG. 2, a holder 30 is shown attached to a mounting portion 32 of the upper portion 26. The holder 30 has a drawer-like configuration adapted to retain a customized pod in a predetermined position in the single-serving brewer. The holder 30 includes a wall 33 which defines a cavity 34 therein. With further reference to FIG. 3, the wall 33 defines an upper rim 36. The upper rim 36 defines an entry opening 38. Although shown as having a drawer-like configuration, it is contemplated that any suitably configured holder may be used to retain the customized pod described herein.

[0025] In addition, the holder 30 is configured with a floor 70 positioned in a lower portion of the holder 30 bounded by the wall 33. Upstanding walls or ribs 72 project upwardly from the floor 70 towards the cavity 34 to enable pooling and mixing of the brewing beverage prior to dispensing into the cup 28. A drain 74 formed in a lower portion of the floor 70, facilitates the draining of brewed beverage from the cavity 34.

[0026] A support structure 73, adapted to retain the customized pod above the floor 70 of the holder 30, is provided overlying the ribs 72. Although preferably configured as an open mesh structure using woven metal strands, other configurations of the support structure 73 having other materials are contemplated by this disclosure. The support structure 73 may be either fixedly attached or removably attached to an inside surface of the holder 30.

[0027] When the holder 30 containing the customized pod is inserted into the upper portion 26, it engages with the mounting portion 32. As illustrated, the mounting portion 32 includes one or more ramped, or inclined, surfaces with flat surfaces disposed therebetween, sized to receive the wall 33 when the holder 30 is inserted into the upper portion 26.

Additionally, the mounting portion 32 may include a release assembly 60 to selectively retain the holder 30 and ensure proper positioning of the customized pod during the brewing process.

[0028] As mentioned hereinabove, the customized pod may be configured in one of many suitable configurations adapted to enable substantial containment of a brewing substance while at the same time, allowing brewing substance selection and accommodating varying amounts of the selected brewing substance. Additionally, the customized pod may be constructed using one of many suitable materials such as a reusable synthetic or metallic material or a disposable filter paper material, to name a few.

[0029] For example, the customized pod may be configured as a refillable infusion container constructed of a metallic material such as gold mesh and sized and dimensioned to be received in the cavity 34 of the holder 30. FIG. 4 is a perspective view of a refillable infusion container 200 according to an embodiment of the invention. In one embodiment, the refillable infusion container 200 includes a container portion 202 coupled to a removable spring loaded handle 204. In another embodiment, the container portion 202 is provided without a handle 204. The container portion 202 includes a first container half 206 having a first rim 208 radially disposed around the edge of the first container half 206, and a second container half 210 having a second rim 212 radially disposed around the edge of the second container half 210. The handle 204 is preferably formed by a first outer arm 214 and a second outer arm 216 pivotally mounted to a V-shaped spring loaded actuating arm 218. A first end of the first outer arm 214 is pivotally coupled to a first end of the V-shaped spring loaded actuating arm 218. Similarly, a first end of the second outer arm 216 is pivotally coupled to a second end of the V-shaped spring loaded actuating arm 218. The first outer arm 214 includes a first flange 220 disposed proximate to the second end of the first outer arm 214, and the second outer arm 216 includes a second flange 222 disposed proximate to the second end of the second outer arm 216. A pivot pin 224 inserted through a first aperture in the first flange 220 and a second aperture in the second flange 222 pivotally couples the first outer arm 214 to the second outer arm 216.

[0030] The second end of the first outer arm 214 is removably attached to a first rim portion 226 of the first rim 208 via a first bracket 230 mounted to the first rim portion 226. Similarly, the second end of the second outer arm 216 is removably attached to a second rim portion 228 of the second rim 212 via a second bracket 232 mounted to the second rim portion 228. The first rim portion 226 is proximate to the second rim portion 228 when the refillable infusion container 200 is biased into the closed position.

[0031] Upon compression of the V-shaped spring loaded actuating arm 218, near the area of the first ends of the first and second outer arms 214, 216, the first and second container halves 206, 210 are urged apart. The first rim portion 226 is no longer proximate to the second rim portion 228. Any suitable brewing substance, in any suitable quantity may then be deposited within the container portion 202 (*see*, FIG. 5). Upon closing the first and second container halves 206, 210, the container portion 202 may be latched via a first latch 240 and a second latch 242 (not shown), and the spring loaded handle 204 removed. The "customized pod" in the form the latched container portion 202 may then be placed in the cavity 34 (*see*, FIG. 6). Although removable, it is contemplated that the spring loaded handle 204 may be non-removable and may include a non-heat conductive material (*e.g.*, high temperature plastic, suitable metal, or ceramic material) adapted for grasping during removal of the refillable infusion container 200 from the single-serving brewer 20. The embodiment using the non-removable handle included sufficient gasketing and sealing around the handle to maintain the desired closure of the brewing chamber during the brewing process.

[0032] The refillable infusion container 200 may be constructed of any suitable metallic material including, but not limited to gold mesh, enabling suitable brewing liquid flow therethrough and suitable durability for repeated use and reuse. In addition, although preferably puck-shaped, the refillable infusion container 200 may be configured in one of any number of suitable shapes sized to fit within the cavity 34, including, but not limited to, a dome shape, a spherical shape, an elliptical shape, a basket shape or a conical shape, to name a few. Further, although the removable spring loaded handle 204 enables access to the interior of the container portion 202, other methods to access the interior of the container portion 202 are contemplated. For example, the first and second container halves 204, 206 may be threadedly coupled or hingedly coupled in a clam shell fashion, thereby precluding the need for access via operation of the spring loaded handle 204.

[0033] The container portion may also be configured as a reusable container 250, utilizing a resilient metallic porous material or a spring loaded metallic porous material. As illustrated by FIGS. 7 and 8, the reusable container 250 may be configured as a resilient "purse-shaped" reusable pod 252 of a suitable shape and sized and dimensioned for use with a corresponding brewer. The purse-shaped pod has a slit therein (rather than being formed by first and second container halves 206, 210). As illustrated, the interior of the purse-shaped reusable pod 252 can then be accessed by "pinching" opposing sides 254 and 256 of the resilient purse-shaped device 252 (*see*, Figs, 7 and 8).

[0034] As mentioned above herein, the customized pod may also be constructed using other types of porous materials such as a disposable filter paper material or other suitable disposable porous material. For example, FIG. 9 is a perspective view of a disposable customized pod 260 constructed of a disposable filter paper material and configured in a "cup-cake" filter shape. In the illustrated example, the disposable customized pod 260 includes a cup portion 262 having a wall 264 which defines a brewing substance holding area 266 for holding the brewing substance, which is generally similar to larger versions of this filter configuration as used in larger brewers. However, a flap portion 268 can be added to the filter, coupled to a portion of a rim 267 defined by the wall 264. Upon receiving the brewing substance in the brewing substance holding area 266, the flap portion 268 is folded over the brewing substance holding area 266. The filled, disposable customized pod 260 may then be placed in the cavity 34 (*see,* FIG. 2) for brewing. The disposable customized pod 260, therefore, provides sufficient containment for the brewing substance, while at the same time, allows the user to select the type and amount of brewing substance. Although illustrated as having a flap portion 268, it is contemplated that the disposable customized pod 260 may be configured without the flap portion 268. Further, it is also contemplated that the disposable customized pod 260 may be configured in one of any number of suitable shapes such as a cone shape, a trough shape, a pouch shape with or without a twist-top portion, etc.

[0035] The disposable customized pod may also be configured with a removable portion that is discarded after filling to reduce the amount of disposable filter paper material exposed to the brewing liquid during the brewing process. Accordingly, after the brewing substance is placed in the brewing substance holding area 266 but before the beverage is brewed, the removable portion that is to be discarded, is removed.

[0036] For example, the disposable customized pod may be configured as a pouch with a twist-top having a removable portion. Referring to FIGS. 10 and 11, there is shown a disposable customized pod 270 configured as "pouch" with a twist-top 272 having a removable portion 274. After filling with a brewing substance, the brewing substance holding area 266 can be manually twisted shut to contain the brewing substance via the twist-top 272, and the removable segment 274 removed and discard. The filled and closed customized pod 270 can then be placed into the cavity 34 for brewing. Although manually removed by the user, it is contemplated that the removable portion 274 may be automatically removed by a suitable device of the single-serving brewer 20.

[0037] The disposable customized pod also may be configured as one of a string of detachable disposable customized pods that are adapted to be used in a customized pod

making system. It is contemplated that the customized pod making system may be included in the single serving brewer 20 or it may be a stand-alone system. For example, FIG. 12 is an exemplary string of detachable disposable customized pods 300 that may be utilized in conjunction with the single serving brewer of FIG. 1.

[0038] In the illustrated example, the string of detachable disposable customized pods 300 includes four detachable disposable customized pods 302, 304, 306 and 308, however, more or less customized pods may be included. Although the detachable disposable customized pods are illustrated as having a circular "pouch" shape, other shapes, including, but not limited to, a cone shape, a puck shape, a square shape and a basket shape, are contemplated. In one embodiment, the detachable disposable customized pods 302, 304, 306 and 308 may be detached, filled with a brewing substance and placed into the single serving brewer 20 via a manual process. In another embodiment, the detachable disposable customized pods 302, 304, 306 and 308 may be detached, filled with a brewing substance and placed into the automatically the single serving brewer 20 via an automatic process. In further embodiments, it is contemplated that one or more combinations of manual and automatic steps may be utilized to detach, fill and place the detachable disposable customized pods 302, 304, 306 and 308 into the single serving brewer 20.

[0039] Additionally, manual or automatic closing or sealing of the filled detachable disposable customized pods 302, 304, 306 and 308 is contemplated. For example, upon filling the detachable disposable customized pod 302 with a brewing substance, a neck portion 301 of the detachable disposable customized pod 302 may be automatically cut and/or removed, and the remaining aperture sealed via heat, compression, suitable adhesive or by use of mechanical clamps or retainers.

[0040] Referring again to FIG. 2, in the installed position, the holder 30 is positioned with the entry opening 38 in position to receive the brewing liquid (*e.g.*, water). The entry opening 38 and cavity 34 are positioned below a sprayhead 40. Any one of the customized pods described above is held within the cavity 34. During operation, the brewing liquid 46 provided by a water delivery system of the single-serving brewer 20, enters a sprayhead area 42 defined by the sprayhead 40. The brewing liquid 46 in the sprayhead area 42 then flows through holes 44, through the entry opening 38, and into the cavity 34. Upon receipt in the cavity 34, the brewing liquid 46 mixes with the brewing substance retained by the customized pod. The brewing liquid 46, flowing through the customized pod and infusing the brewing substance contained therein, subsequently drains under pressure and gravity through the support structure 73, and into open areas defined by the upstanding ribs 72 where the soluble

portions of the brewing substance with the brewing liquid are pooled and mixed. When completed, the brewed beverage drains through a drain hole 50, into the drain 70 for dispensing into the cup 28.

[0041] Further details of the configuration and operation of the single-serving brewer 20 can be found in related provisional applications entitled "Apparatus, System and Method for Infusing a Pre-Packaged Pod (Atty. Docket No. 27726-95094) filed February 9, 2004, "Apparatus System and Method for Retaining Beverage Brewing Substance" (Atty. Docket No. 27726-95093) filed February 6, 2004, and "Pod Brewer Design" (Atty. Docket No. 27726-95113) filed February 10, 2004. Additional information relating to adjustable controlling the single-serving brewer 20 can be found in a related provisional application entitled "Adjustable Volume Brewer" (Atty. Docket No. 27726-95059) filed Nov. 7, 2003, U.S. Provisional Application No. 60/518,039. Additional information related to a spray head system and method for delivering water to the brewing assembly of the single-serving brewer 20 can be found in U.S. Provisional Application entitled "Water Delivery System, Method and Apparatus" (Atty. Docket No. 27726-95058) filed November 7, 2003, U.S. Provisional Application No. 60/518,411. Each of the above-referenced applications and the materials set forth therein is incorporated herein in its entirety by reference.

[0042] In use, the beverage maker is employed with a refillable or reusable substance container as well as a selectively fillable substance container. The steps involved in this process include providing a infusion container. The infusion container is then filled with a suitable beverage making substance. The infusion container is placed in a corresponding beverage maker and employed during a brewing cycle to produce a desired beverage. At the conclusion of the brewing cycle, the infusion container can be removed and disposed of or cleansed for reuse.

[0043] While embodiments have been illustrated and described in the drawings and foregoing description, such illustrations and descriptions are considered to be exemplary and not restrictive in character, it being understood that only illustrative embodiments have been shown and described and that all changes and modifications that come within the spirit of the invention are desired to be protected. The applicants have provided description and figures which are intended as illustrations of embodiments of the disclosure, and are not intended to be construed as containing or implying limitation of the disclosure to those embodiments. There are a plurality of advantages of the present disclosure arising from various features set forth in the description. It will be noted that alternative embodiments of the disclosure may not include all of the features described yet still benefit from at least some of the advantages

of such features. Those of ordinary skill in the art may readily devise their own implementations of the disclosure and associated methods, without undue experimentation, that incorporate one or more of the features of the disclosure and fall within the spirit and scope of the present disclosure.

CLAIMS:

1. A beverage maker using a reusable infusion container for making a beverage.

2. A reusable infusion container for use with a beverage maker.

3. A beverage maker using a selectively fillable infusion container.

4. A selectively fillable infusion chamber.

5. A method of making a beverage using a reusable infusion chamber.

6. A method of making a beverage using a selectively fillable infusion container.

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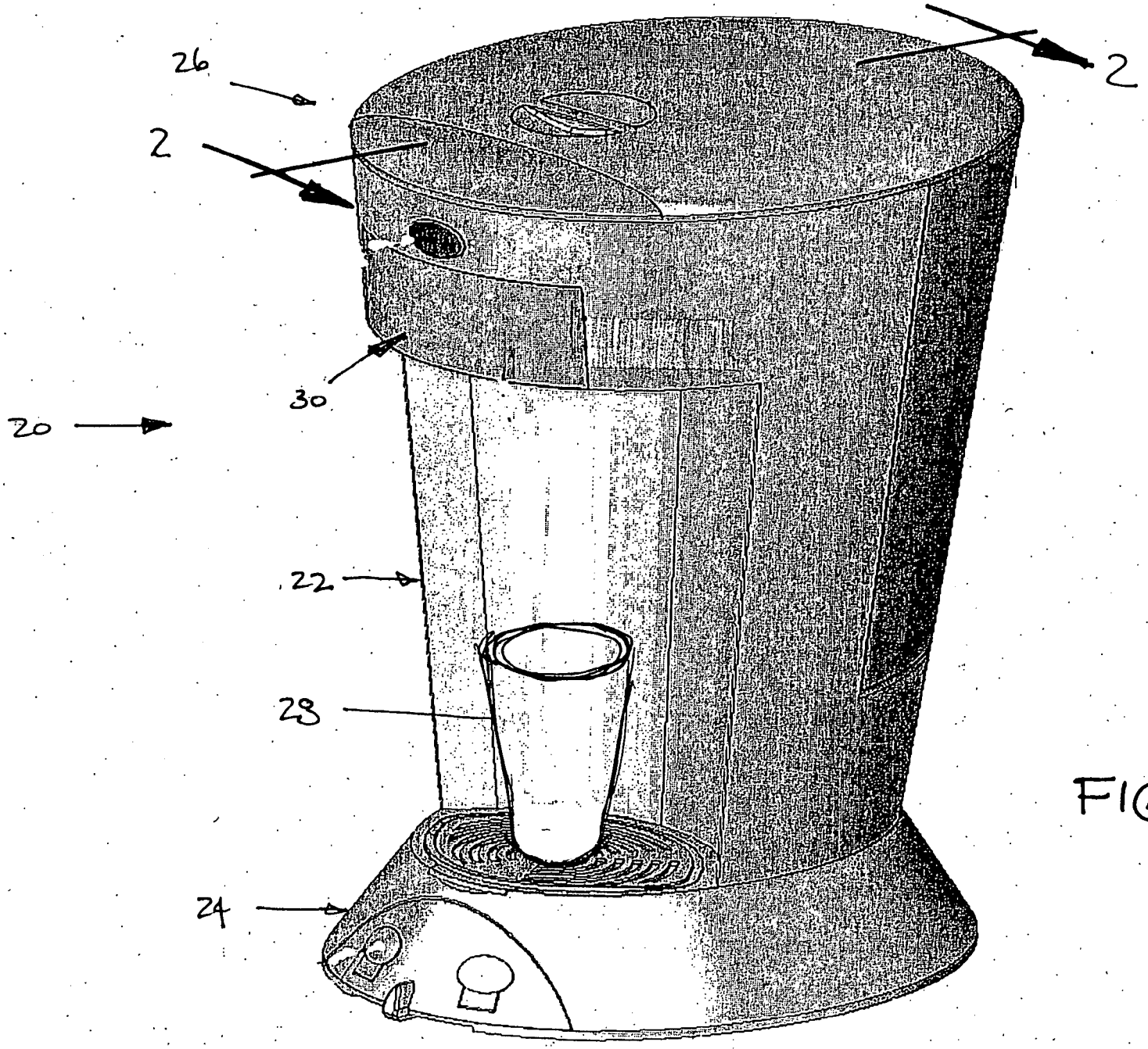

FIG. 1

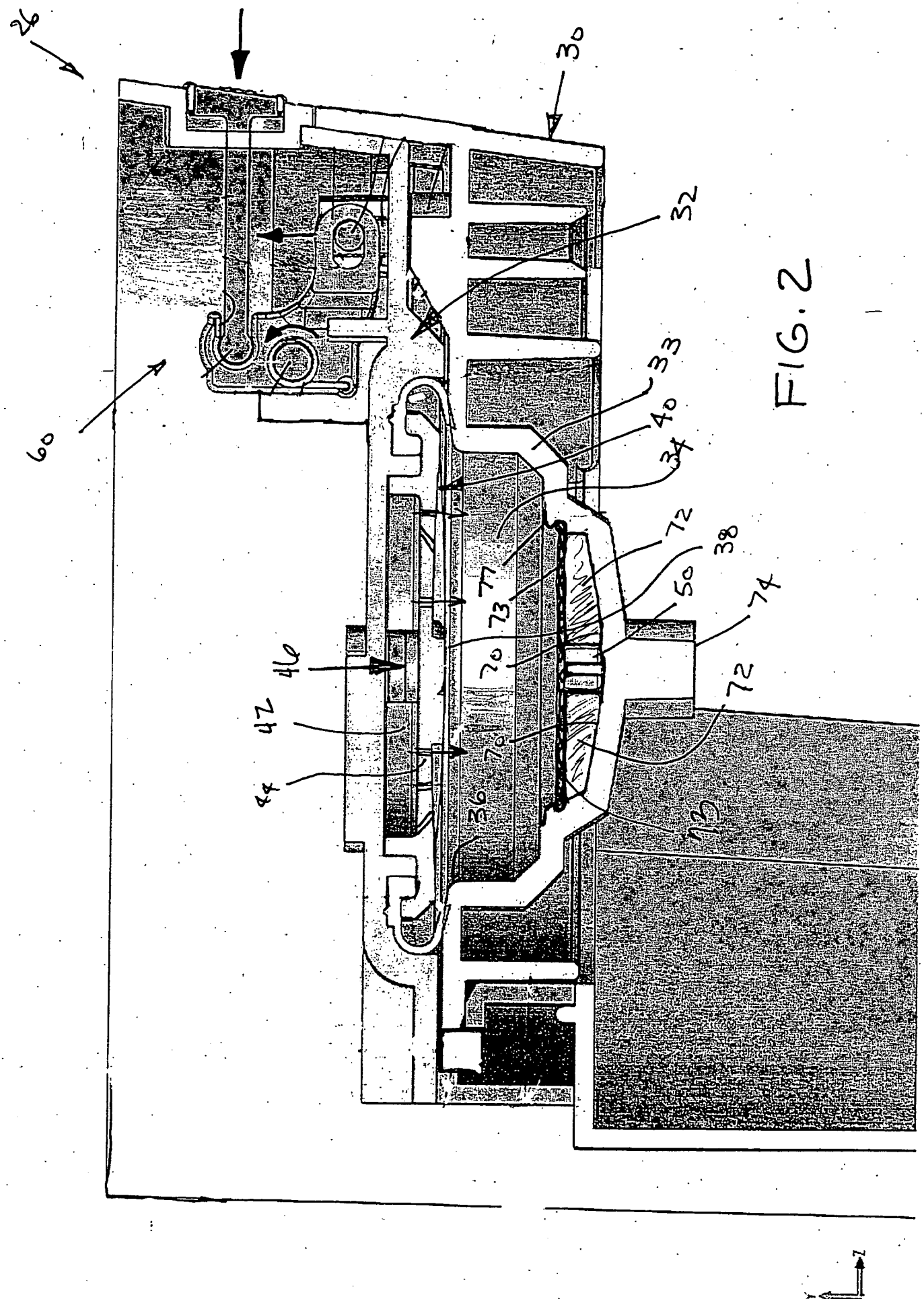

FIG. 2

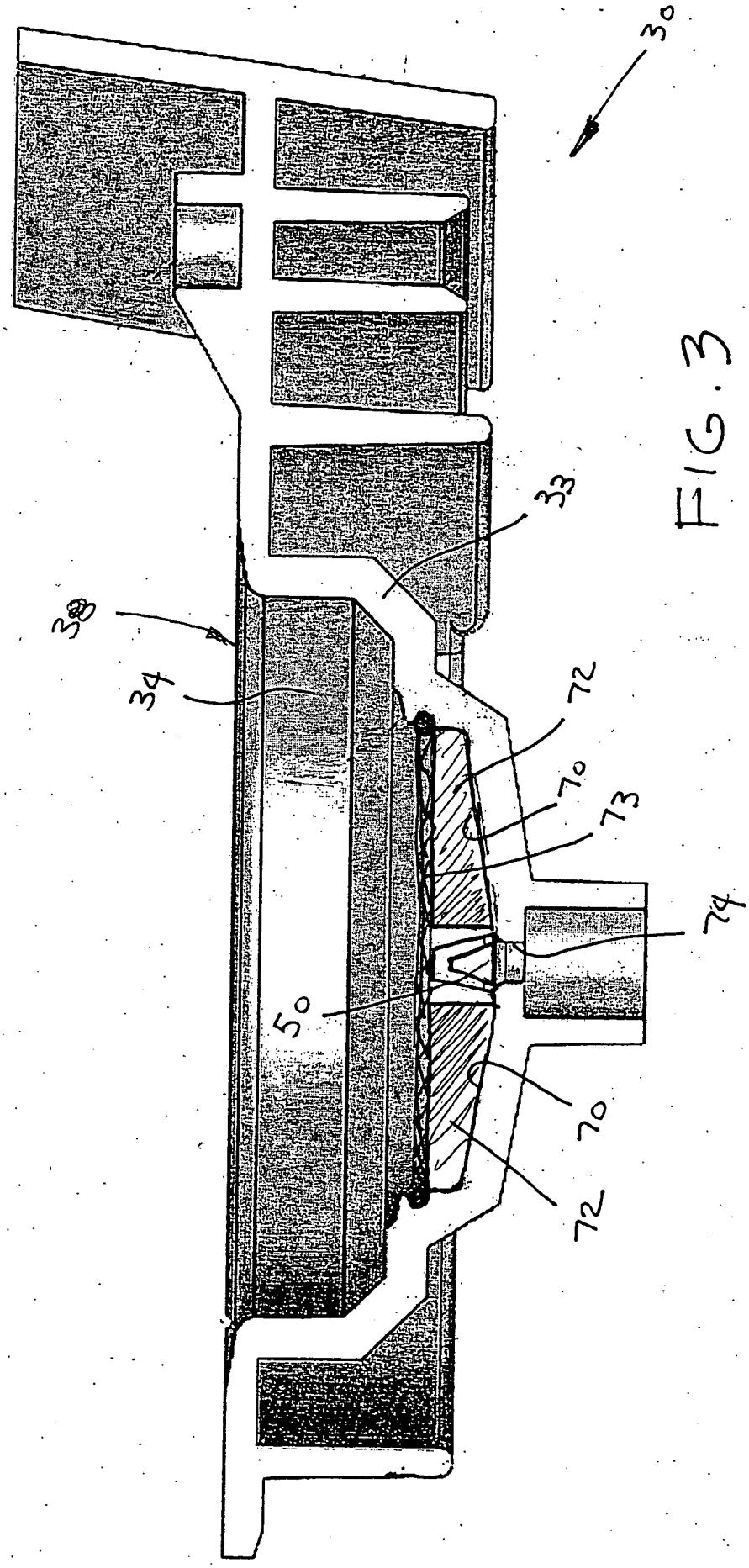

FIG. 3

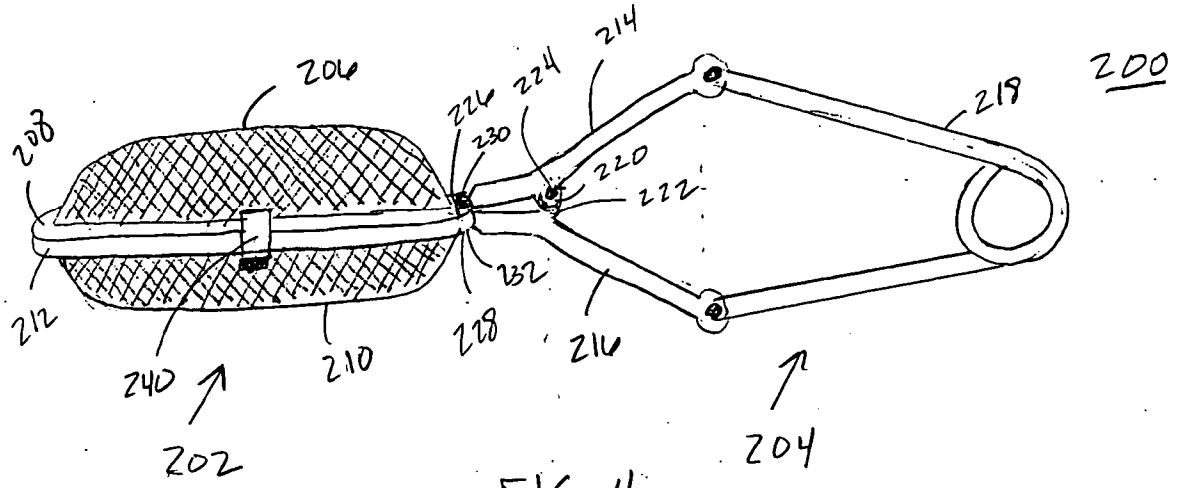

FIG. 4

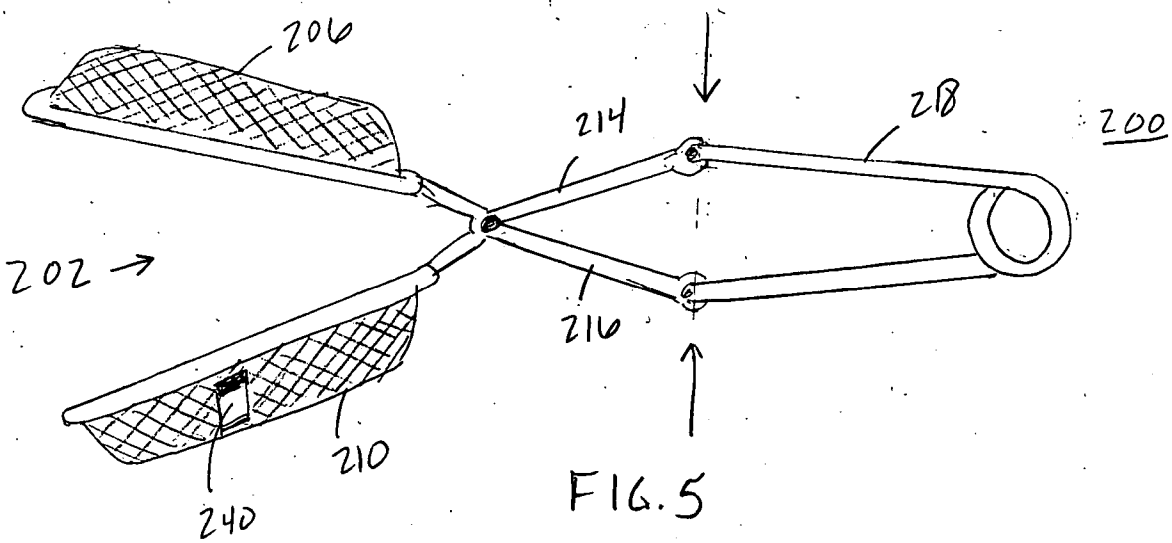

FIG. 5

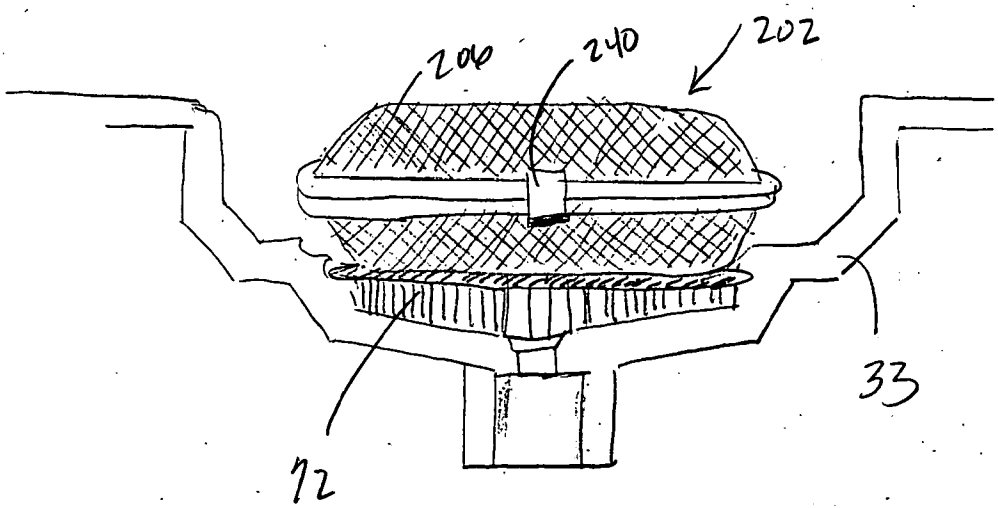

FIG. 6

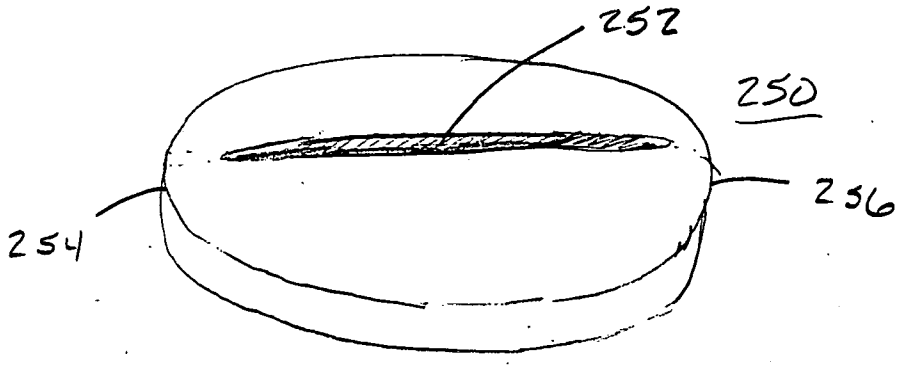

FIG. 7

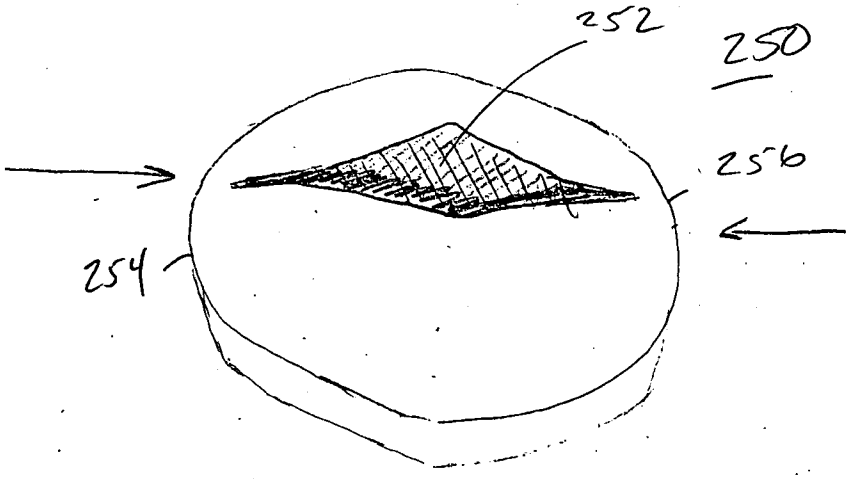

FIG. 8

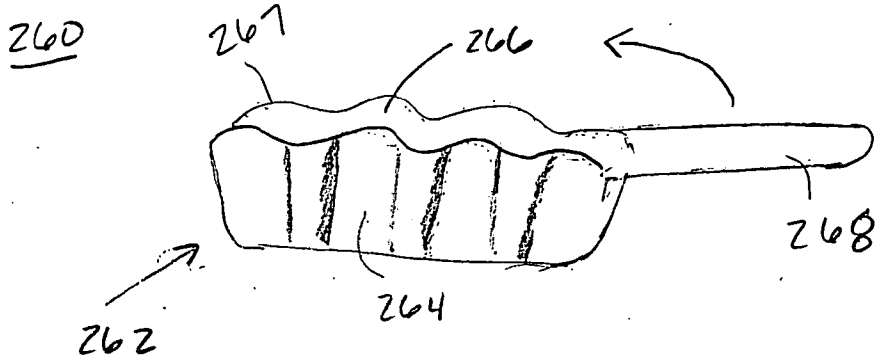

FIG. 9

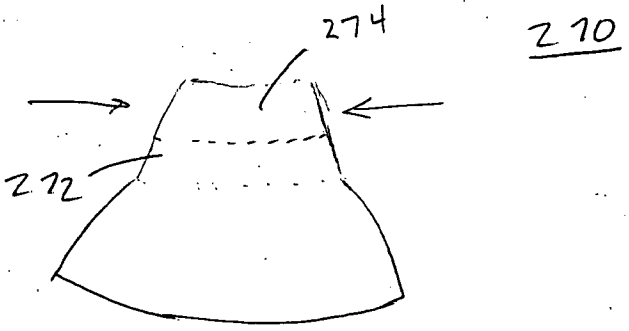

FIG 10

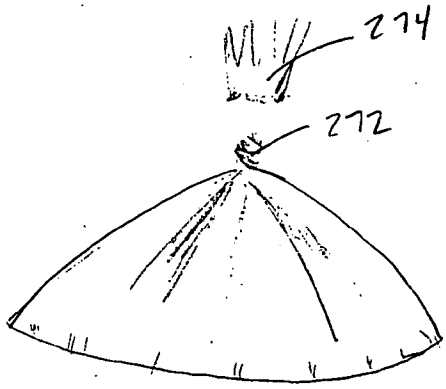

FIG 11

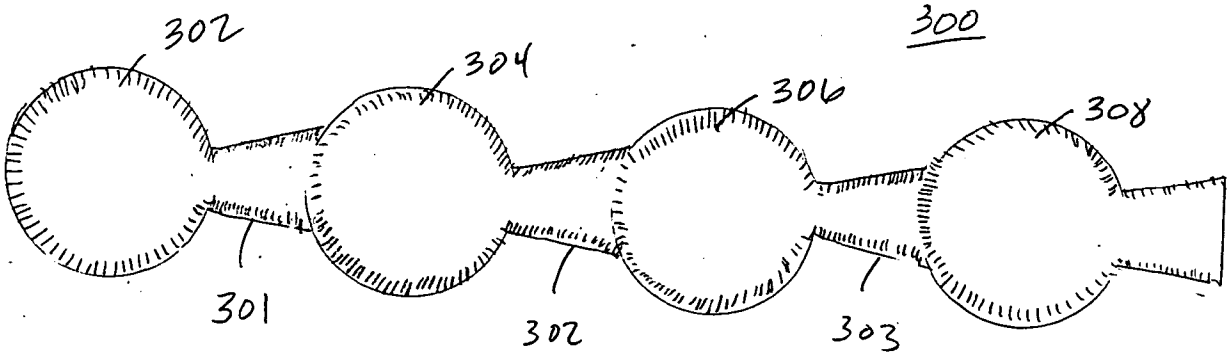

FIG. 12